THE EUROPEAN DIFFICULTY.

It would have excited a strong sensation—five centuries ago—if, in a time when the Pope was displeased with anybody in Christendom, a faithful likeness of himself and his spiritual councillors had been dispersed among the towns and villages of England. What the Pope thought and said,—what he promised or threatened—was important to every man, woman, and child in Western Europe. When he was offended to a certain point, a complete desolation spread over the country which lay under his displeasure. The church-bells did not toll: the people would have rejoiced to hear that doleful sound; for, instead of it, there was a silence which was worse to bear.

A complete stop was put to all religious observances but two, and those two were permitted only that innocent souls might not be lost. The priests were seen only when discharging those two offices—hurrying to baptise the newly-born, and to administer the viaticum to the dying. The priests looked stern and mournful. They had spread ashes on the floors of the churches, and laid the holy images upon them; and they then retired to pray for repentance of the sinners, and the return of the Pope's favour, that the curse might be removed. They were not permitted to bury the dead: and the dead were therefore laid in large pits, without a word being said over them. The priests could not perform the marriage-service, and young people had to wait,—they knew not how long. On Sundays the nation tried to pass the day in the old Sunday sports of the kingdom; but it was not the same thing as sport which follows homage rendered and duty done. So, in a little while, the people made Sunday like other days, and worked seven days in the week. News spread through the land which disheartened them at their work. Foreigners would hold no intercourse with a nation which lay under the Pope's curse; and thus there would soon be no silk, or wool, or precious woods, or other commodities from abroad, and nobody abroad would purchase goods from an excommunicated country. Above all, there was the heavy sense of the Divine rebuke, administered by the Pontiff, spreading a deep gloom over each day and hour. At such a period, if it had been possible to circulate an engraving of the Holy Father and his priest-ministers throughout the kingdom, what a rush there would have been to see it! The carpenter would have come from his work-bench, and the dyer from his vat, and the swineherd from the forest, and the women from the dairy, to gaze (some through their tears) on the countenance of him who held their spiritual and social fate in his hand. Bold warriors would have bent their heads, and infants would have been taught to clasp their hands before it. Wistful eyes would have searched in every face in the group of portraits for chances of relenting,—for some token of a pitying heart within. Many would have willingly walked to Rome with peas in their shoes, if there was any chance of obtaining a pardon at the end of the march; but it was too well known that petitioners clothed in sackcloth, with ashes on their heads, had knelt before the Pope in vain.

Thus was it in former times, except that there was no such portrait to exhibit; but, instead of it, some returned pilgrim here and there, whom the people assembled to see and question. Thus was it for five years, in the reign of King John. But times are changed.

When we look at a print of the Pope and his councillors of our days, we remember that a part of Christendom is under his displeasure: but we do not feel it. It is nothing to us, except as an interesting matter of observation; and we know that it is not of much more consequence to the special objects of his censure. He has more than once threatened the King of Sardinia with excommunication, and he has—so lately as New Year's Day—sent a message of fierce rebuke to the Emperor of the French; but we all feel that the world's business, religion, and pleasure, will go on much the same, whether the Pope is gracious

or angry. When we look upon his portrait, it is with strong interest, certainly, but without fear, or home-felt emotion of any kind. We study it to impress on our memories the countenance of the unhappy Pope who is doomed to exemplify the long-foreseen degradation of that which was for centuries the greatest power in the world.

This year will, in all probability, decide the future destiny of the papacy as a European sovereignty. Of its authority as a spiritual power, this is not the place to speak. The quarrel between the Pope and his antagonists is not an affair of his spiritual kingdom, but his temporal dominions. It is not a case of rebellion of heretics against the head of the church, but of the revolt of Catholic subjects against a sovereign who lets them be oppressed by tyrannical ministers of state.

Popes are changed as well as times. Instead of bold, combative, self-willed, haughty priests, we have now, in the highplaces of the Church, men who begin with supposing themselves as powerful as their predecessors, and who set to their work accordingly, but who collapse at once when they find out their mistake,—still using the language of pretension and insolence, but using craft and cruelty where they can no longer rule by unquestioned authority.

From that point of degradation no government ever revives. Its duration is merely a question of time; a question only too interesting, however, to those whom it most nearly concerns,—the Italian subjects of the Pope. They and he, and the dignitaries about him have the nearest concern in the matter which interests all Christendom. It may be difficult to say which we should pity most —him or his subjects. As for his priestly officials, we need not trouble our feelings much about them. According to their deserts, they will suffer either a righteous retribution for the selfish abuse of power, or will meekly bear, with some moral satisfaction, the consequences of their mistakes in mixing up civil despotism with the exercise of their spiritual authority.

There are several reasons why we should pity Pius the Ninth sincerely and deeply. He is a man in the wrong place. He might have been a kindly and devoted minister among the poor; and, without any act of his own, he is lifted up to a place whence oppression necessarily bears hard upon the multitude. He was made for orderly and ordinary times of peace in the Church, or for seasons of natural calamity: but not for any crisis of social or ecclesiastical conflict. He has not intellect, nor moral force, nor self-reliance, nor bodily health for such a position as that of the head of a sinking state; and thus, if we cannot feel any great respect for him on the ground of his merits, we are sensible of a respectful compassion for his sufferings in the unhappy lot he is fulfilling.

There was a time, however—and that not very long ago—when many of us said that, happen what might, we would never cease to give the present Pope credit for the early acts of his reign. Let us carefully redeem that pledge, and keep his best deeds uppermost in our minds.

It is interesting to speculate on what he would have been if he had followed up his first destined profession, and continued a soldier. He would hardly have risen to any high military rank, unless by favour: but he would have been a pleasant comrade, and a kind and considerate commander; and he would probably have escaped the disease of epilepsy, which may be answerable for much of the failure of his latter life. Whatever may have been the motive which led him to choose a clerical life, among his many enemies none have impugned the purity of his life, or questioned the due subordination of his affections to his calling. No nepotism has caused scandal during his reign: no love of money for his relations, nor ambition for himself. Pure in conduct, and disinterested in feelings while a working priest, he deserved the hopes and the homage poured out before him when he recovered from the fainting-fit with which he received the news of his election to the Papal-chair. This was in 1846, when he was fifty-four years of age.

It was supposed that the long-needed reforming Pope had now arrived. Cardinal Ferretti, Archbishop of Imola (as he was before his election), was known to have seen and heard a good deal about liberalism in Chili, where he had been sent on service, soon after the independence of that republic: and his six years in the Romagna had taught him much of the grounds of discontent which existed under the rule of Gregory the Sixteenth, and his tyrannical Minister Lambruschini. As he had formerly sympathised with the sufferers by pestilence, devoting himself and all that he had, night and day, to the victims of cholera; so, in the Romagna, he was understood to give his pity and his prayers to the victims of the papal tyranny of that day. That he would be a reforming Pope, and the father of his people was the general expectation, thirteen years ago: and he sincerely intended and endeavoured to be so.

Some surprise was occasioned in Puritan New England about that time by an incident which occurred one evening, in the neighbourhood of Rome. It was the Pope's custom to recreate himself by a drive into the country, where he was wont to get out of the carriage, and walk for exercise. One summer evening, about sunset, he was standing, in his ordinary dress, with his cap on his head, looking at the landscape from a hill-road when a party of Americans came up, only just landed at Cività Vecchia. They were sons and daughters of the Pilgrims; yet they were presently kneeling in the dust, the ladies with their faces bathed in tears, receiving the Pope's blessing. There was nothing wonderful in their emotion. A throng of associations connected with the supreme papacy of past ages no doubt arose in their minds in contrast with the destiny and character of the reforming Pope before them, who was to purge out the evils of the institution, and show what a paternal and really spiritual government could do. With these thoughts in their minds, and the benign-looking grey-haired old man standing before them in the sunset light, gazing back upon Rome, which they were about to enter for the first time—it is not surprising that strong emotions stirred even Puritan bosoms.

Some of that party may be saying now, "Who

can believe that this man, now christened 'the European difficulty,' is the same? He who sanctions the separation of the child Mortara from his Jewish parents: he who lets his officials scourge, and imprison, and banish, and persecute his helpless subjects by thousands: he who permits the roads to be infested by brigands because his ministers suspend and defy the laws in the towns and villages: he who gives impunity to his troops for the slaughter, pillage, and brutality perpetrated by them in Perugia: he who allows all natural blessings and all human affections to be violated and tortured in his name. Can this be the saint and ministering angel, and holy apostle who blessed us in that sunset light, while we almost worshipped him?"

Yes—it is the same man: and without much, if any change. It is only that different times have presented different phases of his character. The narrowness of view, the shallowness of intellect, the jealousy of interference, the tenacity of authority, the proneness to scold, the fear of those near him, and contempt of those afar off, were all in him in his best days, and certain to be brought out if he should live a dozen years. It is the same man who declared himself the subject of a miracle when a floor fell in without killing him, and who charged the Marquis d'Azeglio with denying the immortality of the soul by promoting a good social organisation in the Romagna. It is the same man who could, at one time, restore to their home three thousand citizens banished by his predecessor, and at another transport, bring back, torment, and insult, and bewilder with misery a yet greater number of his subjects, in imitation of Austrian rule. It is the same man who could, for ten years, rest on French troops in his capital for protection from his own subjects, and then, on New Year's Day, 1860, insult the Emperor of the French in terms of abusive spite, addressed to the Emperor's own officers. It is the same man throughout—never strong enough for the place, in which the strongest must fail to do what is expected from him.

The question now is,—can any strength or wisdom carry the papacy through its present crisis?

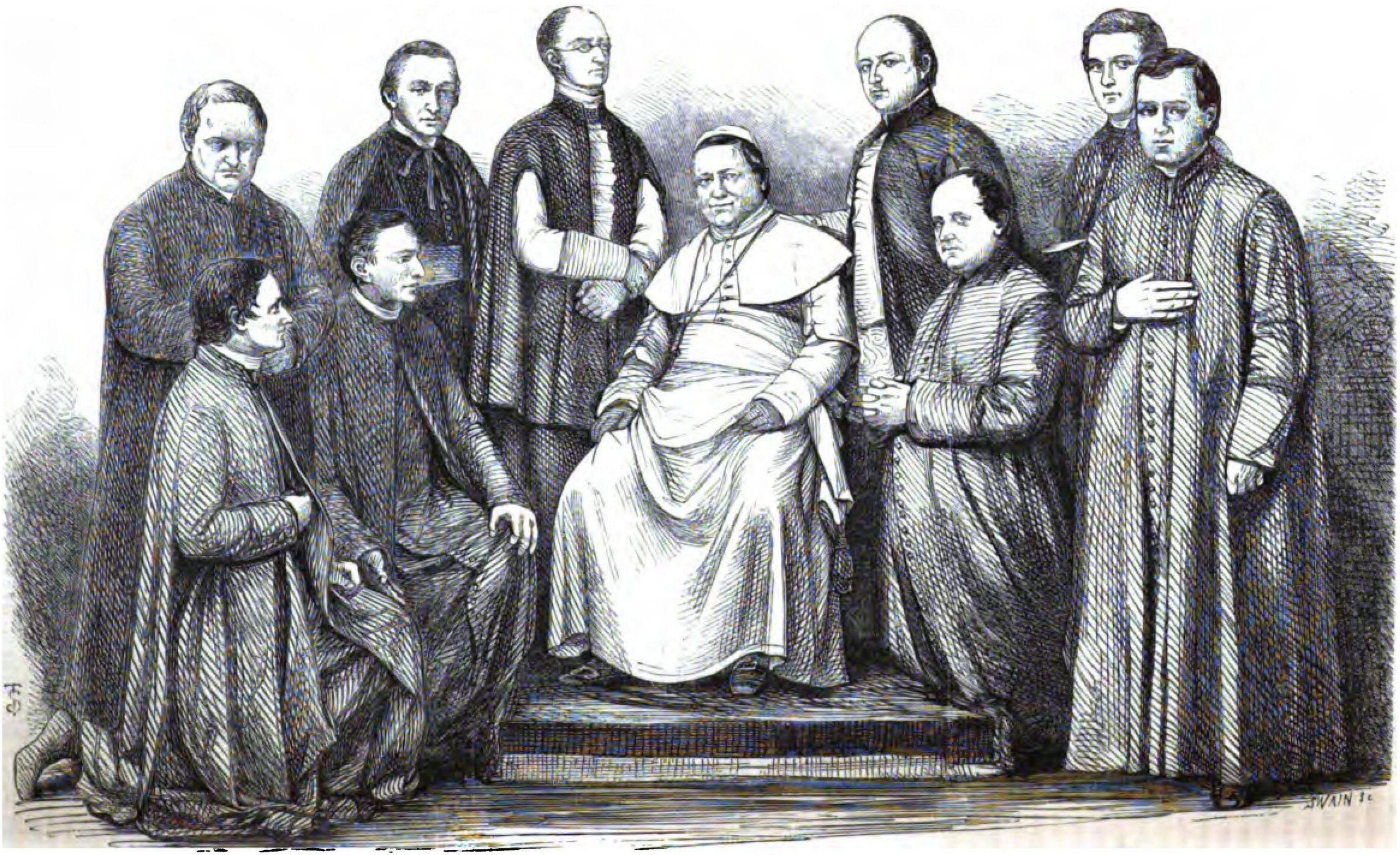
On the one hand, the Pope has 139,000,000 of spiritual subjects, many of whom (and especially those who live in the remotest places) are eager to sustain him in all the rights he ever claimed. Again, the private character of Pius the Ninth justifies the respect and affection of those distant subjects, and relieves his cause from the dead-weight of scandal which burdened papal pretensions many a time in the old days. On the other hand, his government is found unendurable by his temporal subjects, and he was always unable, and is now unwilling, to regenerate it. There is only one way in which it can be done—by changing it, in all civil affairs, from a priestly to a secular government; and this is what no Pope probably could effect, and what this Pope will certainly never attempt. As for the rest, he early made promises which he could not fulfil. He rushed into acts of which he did not foresee the consequence. When those consequences arrived, he made an abrupt stop in his liberal career; became virtually a prisoner in his own palace; fled thence over the Neapolitan frontier in the disguise of a footman of the Bavarian Minister; became the familiar and admiring friend of the late King of Naples; was brought home under foreign guardianship, and has since lived, apparently among his people, but under the protection of French troops. German soldiers are now stealing into his territories, by way of the Adriatic, and assembling, we are told, to fight the Pope's own subjects in the Romagna.

The only idea in the Vatican of restoring the power and influence of the papacy seems to be obtaining the aid of foreign sovereigns and their soldiery to put down the Pope's own subjects. That this will not do, he is now assured by his protector, the French Emperor, whom he styles "the eldest son of the Church." His remaining territories shall be secured to him, says the Emperor, if he will at once surrender the revolted part. This would be rather a pity, if, as the same oracle declares, his spiritual power would be all the greater for his being unincumbered by the temporal dominions. It does not appear how a part can be guaranteed to remain under bad government after another portion has obtained relief: nor who would do it; nor who would benefit by its being done. The Pope will not hear of surrendering anything.

What then? If we try to conceive a modern Pope laying a nation under interdict for five years, two circumstances seem indispensable;—that the nation should be purely catholic, and that the Pope's power should be purely spiritual. Other parties would interfere and spoil the process, if there were the smallest intermixture of protestantism in the humbled nation, or of physical force with the Holy Father's authority. If there be a way, therefore, of saving the Papacy, it is by surrendering the States of the Church to a sovereign of their own choice. If this were done, it would be, in the estimation of most people, the wisest practical step; and we might look with deep interest on the group of the last territorial Pope and his advisers, preparing themselves to enter on a new spiritual reign, in hope of renovating the true power of the Holy See.

But it is not to be so. Many of the Pope's best subjects wish that it were. The Holy Father himself, however, will part with nothing. He struggles for his territories as he does for his ecclesiastical supremacy. He thinks those his best subjects who abet him in the fatal imprudence of representing his temporal and spiritual powers as inseparable. If he does not govern Bologna, they say, he cannot issue valid commands from the Vatican. If this be true, it is all over with him: for it is becoming clear that he will never more rule Bologna.

In our own country, as on the Continent, we see that the Catholics move in three divisions. Frantic Irish papists worship or revile the Powers of Europe, according to their view of the probability of the Pope keeping or losing his dominions. These popish politicians adored the French Emperor last spring, and denounce him now because he sees, better than he did, the necessary issue of his own war. They scold England, as if she were at war with the Pope, because she is not at war for him. According to these clamorous



THE POPE AND HIS CHIEF OFFICERS. (See note p. 121.)

men, all is lost if the Romagna is lost. Another section abstains from censure, but desires our Government to protect the interests of the Pope by diplomacy. A third takes the general English view: that the essence of the papal power is in its spirituality; and that if it is to revive, it must be as High Priest, and not as king on earth.

The frantic party demands war: and it is believed that Cardinal Wiseman has promised an Irish brigade, while Dr. M'Hale engages for a million of gallant soldiers. The law of the land gives a short answer to that. There will no more be an Irish brigade putting down the Pope's own subjects on his behalf, than there will be an English brigade, under Garibaldi's command, on the other side. Such idle talk does not contribute to the dignity of the Holy See.

If, then, the Pope and his advisers continue to struggle against the change of the time, and the fixed purpose of the people whom they have alienated, we may look upon them as a set of doomed men—doomed to more than the suffering

of martyrs, because they have not the justification of martyrs:—doomed to suppose their Church overthrown, because they mistake the lands about its base for the rock on which it is founded:—doomed perhaps to retire into monastic life, as many disappointed statesmen have done before them. The Pope himself declares that to ask him to give up the Romagna is a breach of all laws, divine and human. Such words are prophetic of the catastrophe. I. S.

Note.—The group on p. 120 is from a private photograph recently taken at Rome, and is probably unique in this country. The central figure is the Pope; nearest, on His Holiness' left, stands Monsignor Pacca; in a kneeling posture is Monsignor G. Talbot, Chamberlain and Secretary to the Pope, formerly Vicar of Evercreech, Somerset. On his right in succession stand Monsignor Borromeo, the Papal Major Domo (answering to our Lord Chamberlain); Prince Hohenlohe, Archbishop of Edessa *in partibus;* and Monsignor Stella, the Pope's Confessor; the kneeling figure nearest to the Pope on the same side is Monsignor de Mérode, now an ecclesiastic and Grand Echanson, formerly an officer who served with distinction with the French Army in Algeria. Let us study this group intently, and see what manner of men these are, whose political domain is slipping away from beneath them.